

Lord Ramsbotham

invites you to a discussion on ;

“Beyond comprehension and decency” A report on medical abuse in immigration detention

and the Parliamentary Launch of the Medical Justice Network



Thursday 12th July 2007 – 2pm to 3.30pm

Palace of Westminster, Committee Room 4A

"The strength of a liberal democracy is measured not by how it treats the majority but by how it cares for minorities and those at the margins of society. The best tests for humanity and decency are conducted in its dark places: in prisons, psychiatric hospitals, and in institutions for failed asylum-seekers and other migrants" - Stephen Shaw, Prison Ombudsman.

Medical Justice has investigated issues that challenge the basis of the sort of society we think we are. Our findings make uncomfortable reading ; medical abuse of vulnerable and otherwise "invisible" detainees, and a contempt for decent values.

Speakers include ;

Dr Felicity de Zulueta, consultant psychiatrist, Maudsley Hospital

Jovanka Savic, solicitor, Sutovich & Hartigan Solicitors

Harris Nyatsanza, Zimbabwean teacher, ex- immigration detainee

Dr Jonathan Fluxman, GP

Alistair Burt MP

The HM Inspector of Prisons' *"Inquiry into healthcare at Yarl's Wood Removal Centre"* (Oct 2006) reported on the treatment of Sophie Odogo, a Ugandan asylum seeker who was reduced to a state of mental collapse, after a catalogue of alleged abuse, self-harm, and the self-inflicted death of Manuel Bravo at Yarl's Wood. The inquiry was the first of its kind and followed demands by Medical Justice and others for an investigation into medical abuse of detainees at Yarl's Wood. Sophie, a rape and torture survivor, was detained for 7 months whilst she was "Fast Tracked" at Yarl's Wood, the UK's main detention centre for women and families. She was part of a 38 day mass hunger-strike by detainees, hospitalised a number of times and on release, was discharged to the psychiatric wing of the Maudsley Hospital where she was admitted for over 6 months.

"[The inquiry] was 'appalling' in what it revealed and should be a source of shame to those involved .. I am not totally surprised at the results, though shocked and genuinely appalled at the depth of failures revealed and inadequacies of those with care and responsibility for detainees ... [IND's] repeated attempts to remove sick detainees went beyond comprehension and decency".
Alistair Burt MP

Findings of the inquiry include ;

- The healthcare service was not geared to meet the needs of those with serious health problems or the significant number of detainees held for longer periods for whom prolonged and uncertain detention was itself likely to be detrimental to their well being.
- There are weak clinical governance systems, inadequate staff training, insufficiently detailed policies and protocols, that mental health care provision is insufficient, and that these inadequacies are compounded by the unresponsiveness of the IND to clinical concerns about an alleged history of torture or adverse medical consequences of continued detention.
- Independent medical opinion was not sought or adhered to and in some cases IND caseworkers, with no declared medical qualification, appeared to be making their own clinical judgements.

3.30pm to 4.00pm – Introduction to Medical Justice resources

- Copies of the Medical Justice "Beyond comprehension and decency : medical abuse in immigration detention" booklet.
- Medical Justice resources for Legal Representatives, Journalists and Parliamentarians.
- Demonstration of the Medical Justice website : www.medicaljustice.org.uk

RSVP : info@medicaljustice.org.uk or 07904 778365. Places are limited - please confirm your attendance at the earliest opportunity.

Medical Justice is a network of volunteers who defend and promote the health rights, and associated legal rights, of immigration detainees in the UK. We seek to end the medical abuse of detainees and end the toxic and profoundly damaging effect of immigration detention.

Our network was established in October 2005 and includes medics, legal representatives, health campaigners, ex-detainees, detainee visitors and others. We have no paid staff or funding other than membership donations – we balance our meager resources between case-work and lobbying for change.

Medical Justice helps individual immigration detainees who have been abused by providing independent medical advice and medico-legal reports. Calling on a combination of medical and legal expertise within the Medical Justice Network, we have facilitated a number of significant legal challenges concerning healthcare provision to immigration detainees.

Despite having no paid staff, Medical Justice has effected change ; over 200 abused patients have been released and we have made some immigration detention conditions less medically harmful. We have medical reasons to believe we have saved lives.

Medical Justice's network of volunteers has achieved a lot in its 18 months existence, demonstrating a dynamic, dedicated and agile membership. Some examples ;

- Handled more than 300+ patients in detention
- Conducted about 125 medical visits into immigration detention centres
- Written about 100 Medico-Legal-Reports, professional statements and letters
- 75% of patients seen by us were released from detention after Medical Justice intervention
- Literature includes "Know Your Medical Rights" leaflet for detainees and more on our website
- Successfully lobbied for HM Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) Inquiry into healthcare at Yarl's Wood
- Home Office policy change – better provision of anti-malarials to detainees
- Home Office policy change – better access for detainees to independent medics
- Home Office policy change – end to the routine handcuffing of detainees on escorts to hospital
- Home Office agreement to audit management of detainees' claims to be torture victims
- Home Office agreement to audit detention estate with ex-detainee to check info available to detainees
- Home Office agreement to consider medical evidence directly from independent doctors
- Yarl's Wood detention centre agreement to not obstruct detainees obtaining hospital test results
- Influenced registration of detention centre healthcare providers with the Healthcare Commission
- Medical Justice articles in the British Medical Journal
- Media coverage includes - Channel 4 News, Radio 4, the Independent, FT, Times, and Guardian.
- Over 300 Medical Justice members, a website and news-service, London office and branches in Oxford and Kent

Medical Justice provides independent medical advice to immigration detainees, which may include clinical assessment, review of existing treatment, recommendations for further treatment, access to detainees' choice of doctor, access to appropriate treatment and hospital care, and the writing of medical reports. We campaign for the immediate release of vulnerable groups from immigration detention who, according to Home Office policy, should only be detained in "exceptional circumstances", in particular victims of torture, children, pregnant women and people with serious physical and mental illness, while seeking adequate care in the community on their release.

Medical Justice calls on the government to close immigration detention centres due to the persistent, widespread and serious harm to health these institutions have on people incarcerated within them. Meanwhile, there should be an immediate moratorium of the building of any new detention centres and transfer of all health care provision from existing private, for-profit providers to the NHS.

Medical Justice campaigns among health professionals, legal representatives, parliamentarians, journalists and other to support our aims and objectives and for the like-minded to join our growing network.

You are also invited to the Medical Justice Launch Party

Tuesday 3 July 2007 from 7.00pm

Venue :Cargo, 83 Rivington St, Kingsland Viaduct, Shoreditch, London, EC2A 3AY.

Asian Dub Foundation, Heatwave, YunGun, ZongZing All Stars and photographic exhibition by Isabelle Merminod

This is a fundraising event, suggested donation £10 (free entry for asylum seekers).

Further info will be available from www.mediclajustice.org.uk

For guaranteed admission please RSVP to medicaljusticelaunch@gmail.com